

Memorial Minute for Neal Salisbury, January 30, 2023 Faculty Meeting
Written by Jennifer Guglielmo, Associate Professor of History, with assistance from Dana Salisbury. Delivered by Sergey Glebov, Professor and Chair of History

Neal Salisbury was a beloved colleague who died on May 27, 2022, with his wife Dana and their daughter Cleo by his side. He will be remembered for his brilliance, generosity, integrity, and "legendary kindness," in the words of historian Philip J. Deloria.

Neal was born in Los Angeles in 1940 and grew up in a family of eight in the San Fernando Valley. His academic journey began when he enrolled in Pierce Junior College. With his energy focused elsewhere, he flunked out, but with the help of his mentor Walter Porges, he gained admission to UCLA, which was then tuition-free for in-state students. To make ends meet, he took odd jobs, working as a drugstore clerk, cab driver, factory worker, and interviewer for the Psychology Department. Seeing his promise and intellectual talent, the UCLA History Department admitted him into their graduate program. He studied under Gary Nash, who inspired Neal to look beyond traditional sources and produce his own body of visionary scholarship.

Neal's research and writing centered on Native Americans as central to North American history, with a focus on Native New England, circa 1500–1700. He was a leading figure in presenting Indigenous history on its own terms, countering narratives established by colonizers that continue to pervade academic scholarship, popular culture, and political discourse. His many publications include *Manitou and Providence: Indians, Europeans, and the Making of New England, 1500-1643* (1982), *A Companion to American Indian History*, edited with Philip J. Deloria (2002), *The People: A History of Native America*, with R. David Edmunds and Frederick E. Hoxie (2007), and most recently, *The Sovereignty and Goodness of God by Mary Rowlandson* (2017).

For his innovative work, Neal received fellowships from the Smithsonian, the Newberry Library, National Endowment for the Humanities, Charles Warren Center at Harvard, National Humanities Center, and American Antiquarian Society. A past president of the American Society for Ethnohistory, he received the organization's Lifetime Achievement Award in 2017. He was also named an honorary member of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts and was the Mellon Distinguished Scholar in Residence at the American Antiquarian Society in 2018-19.

Neal often collaborated with other scholars to shift popular perception of Native Americans, including bringing Native history to K-12 curricula and museums through such outreach programs as the Five College Public Schools Partnership and Native Americans of New England, a Summer Institute for Teachers funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities in 2013. He was also instrumental in creating and sustaining a vibrant Five College Native American and Indigenous Studies Program and community.

Over time, Neal's scholarship was expanded on and enriched by Indigenous scholars, many of whom he mentored. He encouraged them to enter the field and redefine its terms; he championed respect for their contributions. He also helped to connect Indigenous elders, teachers, and community members to audiences eager to hear their experiences and histories. Historian and literary scholar Lisa Brooks notes, "I am indebted to Neal for making the space in which we thrive." Anthropologist Nancy Marie Mithlo remembers, "He made a way for us during a time when others often reacted defensively." Historian Frederick Hoxie writes that Neal was "a vital spirit who drew us together and helped to generate many libraries of new knowledge." Perhaps historian R. David Edmunds best sums up the sentiment that so many of us share: "His scholarship and teaching made the world a better place."

Neal came to Smith in 1973 at the height of the countercultural movement of which he was a part. Coming from Berkeley, he and his wife Dana found the New England academic scene to be quite uptight and foreign. She was a free spirited visual artist. He loved jazz, blues, Dylan, The Stones, and followed countercultural news and scholarship. He never took on the pretentiousness that can pervade elite academia, even while becoming a renowned scholar. He was always open and curious about what the next generations and non-academics had to teach him. His calm demeanor and warm sensibility were also pivotal in helping to shift the tide in the History Department which had been mired in an "old boy" culture for many decades. He served as chair of the department and several back-to-back search committees at a pivotal time and helped to bring in a new generation of scholars. We will all miss his warm spirit and bright smile.